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Published in:
Reconnecting State and Kinship

Publication date:
2018

Document version
Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (APA):
Bundgaard, H., & Olwig, K. F. (2018). Producing "Good" Families and Citizens in Danish Child Care Institutions. In T. Thelen, & E. Alber (Eds.), *Reconnecting State and Kinship* (pp. 200-219). University of Pennsylvania Press.

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Authors: Bundgaard, H. & K.F. Olwig
Published in: Reconnecting State and Kinship (eds. Thelen, T. & E. Alber. Penn University Press.
Publication date: 2017 ©2018
Citation for published version (APA): Bundgaard, H. & K. F. Olwig. 'Producing "Good" Families and Citizens in Danish Child Care Institutions', in: Alber, Erdmute, and Tatjana Thelen. *Reconnecting State and Kinship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017 ©2018
DOI: 10.9783/9780812294415.

Exploring the Interface between the State and the Family: Kinning in Danish Childcare Institutions

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Introduction

In 1882 a small book, *Børnehaven* – or *The Kindergarten* – was published in Denmark. It presented a number of images, music scores and related texts that introduced various educational activities for children according to the principles of the German pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel, who regarded play as essential to children's human, spiritual and intellectual development. The book was published in celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the birth of Fröbel[1] , and it depicted nicely dressed and well-behaved children from good middle-class families eager to learn through play under the guidance of motherly, attentive and fashionably dressed women. This learning through play was set either in well-appointed homes furnished in the best Biedermeier (see below) style, or a kindergarten. The idea of a pre-school educational institution for children was conceived by Fröbel, who in 1840 created a "kindergarten" (literally a children's garden) where children could be raised and nurtured as human beings, and new members of society, with the same tenderness with which the gardener cares for the budding sprouts in a garden (Stybe 1982: n.p.).

When the Fröbel memorial book was published in 1882 there were few kindergartens, and they were mainly for children from privileged middle-class homes. A century later, however, when the book was republished in Denmark, kindergartens had been established throughout the country (and in many other countries) and they were attended by children from all segments of society. Indeed, since the 1980s it has become an integral part of the Danish childhood to attend a kindergarten operating, to a great extent, according to Fröbel's principles. In this paper we will discuss what kind of citizenry is produced in the Danish

kindergartens today. We shall argue that the kindergarten has been highly successful in that it has established itself as a vital formative institution in Danish society. However, the kindergarten's success may have come at a high price for the children who do not derive from Danish middle-class families, and who therefore do not necessarily share the institution's understanding of learning through free play or its emphasis on particular codes of conduct (cf. Edwards this volume). Inspired by anthropological theory emphasizing the significance of care practices for the development of notions of relatedness and belonging (Carsten 2000), we shall argue that key to the children's learning in the community of the kindergarten, and by extension Danish society, are the kinning processes (Howell 2003) that take place in the field of social interrelations between, on the one hand, the public institution of the kindergarten that cares for the children, and, on the other hand, the parents who are responsible for rearing the children. We show that the day-care institutions play a key role in creating an awareness among the children of the particular relatedness they nourish toward their parents vs. the pedagogues. The children's kinning in relation to their parents, we further demonstrate, is attributed positive value if the parents and the day-care institutions share the same ideas of proper child rearing and family relations, whereas their notions of relatedness may be called into question, if their parents do not comply with, or share, the ideas and practices of child rearing promoted by the institutions. These kinning processes, we suggest, have important implications for the children's self-understanding and sense of belonging in Danish society, given the kindergarten's central role in modern Danish society as a site for the production of Danish citizens.

In the first section of the paper we briefly outline how the kindergarten and related institutions have been an important force in creating a segment of middle-class Danish citizens that could form the basis of the democratic society emerging during the nineteenth century and evolving into a modern welfare society in the course of the twentieth century. This is followed by a section examining the Danish kindergarten as a site of kinning and the production of new citizens adhering to Danish middle class norms and then a section discussing problems that this may generate for children belonging to families that for various reasons do not adhere to these norms. Finally we discuss the implications of the conflicting norms for children's place of belonging in Danish society.

The paper is based on ethnographic research on the kindergarten during the period from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. In 2002-3 Helle Bundgaard, in collaboration with Eva Gulløv, carried out fieldwork in two pre-schools and their intake area. The area, which was located north of Copenhagen, was socially and culturally diverse and characterized by both social housing and single-family houses (see Bundgaard and Gulløv 2008).[2] Observations of interactions between children, parents and staff were used as a point of departure for informal conversations and more formal interviews concerned with perceptions of caring practices. In 2006 Karen Fog Olwig conducted life story interviews with 16 teenagers of middle class background in the Copenhagen area that focused on their experiences of growing up in different institutions in the Danish welfare state, ranging from the kindergarten to secondary school.[3] Apart from ethnographic fieldwork the paper also draws on participant observation, as anthropologist -parents, of the close interaction between parents and staff in day-care institutions situated in middle-class suburban and mixed-class inner city areas.

The development of day-care institutions in Denmark

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Bundgaard & Olwig: This refers to a chapter in this forthcoming volume. We do not have the final version. If you want a full reference, we therefore ask that you write it in, since you presumably have the chapter.

Danish pre-school institutions date back to 1828, when *asylums* began to offer day care for the children of working class parents, based on strict or even severe discipline (de Coninck-Smith 1995: 10-11). Almost half a century later, in 1871, the first kindergarten was opened for children of wealthy families (Gulløv 2012: 92). This was an altogether different institution inspired by the German educator Friedrich Fröbel, who developed the idea of the kindergarten as a pre-school institution where children could be educated through creative activities and play (Sigsgaard 1978: 33; Tønsberg 1980: 24; Gulløv 2012: 92). Early in the 1900s, Fröbel's ideas were introduced into the asylums, and *folkebørnehaver* (or people's kindergartens) based on Fröbel's visions began to become established. In 1919, a law was enacted granting public economic support to day-care institutions[4] and since then the Danish state has been increasingly engaged in the care of children. From 1949 the number of day-care institutions grew (Vammen 1977 in Palludan 2008 [2005]: 65) and there was a significant increase during the 1960s when women in large numbers became part of the labor market (Borchorst 2000: 60-61 in Gulløv 2012: 95).

Day-care came to play a progressively central role in the organization of the Danish welfare society and the upbringing of children in Denmark has become more and more professionalized during the second part of the twentieth century (see Gulløv 2012). In 2014, 97 percent of the children between three and five are cared for in *børnehaver* (Danish for kindergartens), while 40 percent of the children up to three years of age attend *vuggestuer* (crèches/nurseries) or age-integrated day-care facilities and 26 percent are enrolled in daycare in a private home where an adult cares for 3-5 children (*Nyt fra Danmarks statistik* 2014). Most of the remaining children are cared for in their home by a parent on maternity or paternity leave, which is state-supported until the child's is one year of age *(Statistisk Årbog* 2011: 137).[5] Long before children begin to attend elementary school, at the age of six, they are thus familiar with the social life of public institutions where they spend between five and eleven hours a day, five days a week (Winther 1999).

The Danish day-care institutions are generally organized on the principles of Fröbel's philosophy. The significance of Fröbel's approach can be seen within the historical context of the close association between the nineteenth century development of an enlightened democratic society and the creating of an educated and cultured middle-class. The establishment of such a class was of particular urgency in countries such as Germany and Denmark (which was heavily influenced by Germany), where a national bourgeois, or middle class, segment of society was regarded as being foundational to the establishment of a modern nation-state (Elias 2000[1939]). In Denmark an educated middle class state civil service, that had gained considerable power during the late eighteenth century under the absolute monarchy with its enlightenment values, played a central role in the country's peaceful transition to a democratic society. This class was oriented toward a German culture of the home later known as the "Biedermeier culture." In Denmark this culture of the home became a high art, celebrating the harmonious, intimate family, sceptical of the foreign and grandiose, and cultivating (and cultivated by) a national culture of literature, music and the arts. This Biedermeier family life, furthermore, became an image of a national family, with the king as the father figure (Lunding 1968; *Den Store Danske Encyklopædi*).

The Fröbel inspired kindergarten, that became an established Danish societal institution in the course of the twentieth century, can be seen to have attained a key position mediating

between the family home and the nation-state with its home-like environment and staff of pedagogues trained at state institutions of pre-school education. Fröebel, according to Robert Davis (2010: 291), saw the kindergarten as "a natural extension of the home and a protected site where otherwise undervalued female capacities (whether learned or innate) could be exercised and women teachers cast confidently in the role of substitute mothers to very small children." Fröbel's notion of the kindergarten as a home-like environment for children was very much based on the notion of the middle-class home. Thus, he found that, for working class children, the kindergarten had an important responsibility to "rebuild by example the moral fabric of family life and to repair the spiritual damage inflicted on infants by the deprivations of industrial living" (ibid.: 292). This ideological goal of giving children a good upbringing through the kindergarten was prominent in the Danish *folkebørnehaver* (kindergartens for the people) that emerged in the early twentieth century and grew in number during the 1930s and 1940s, supported by charity grounded in the churches and political parties. The educational approach adopted by these kindergartens thus was rather controlling (Henriksen 2010: 6), in line with Fröbel's view that children's play needed to be guided by an educator to ensure that it was conducive for their proper development (Tønsberg 1980:28).

The pedagogical principles of the kindergarten changed somewhat during the 1970s, when a broader international movement of progressive education[6] emphasizing free play, emancipation and self-determination began to have an impact on Danish child caring practices in educational settings as well as in the home. This resulted in the more authoritarian practices giving way to what has become known as 'free upbringing' (*fri opdragelse*). During the first decade of the new millennium the increasing prominence of neo-liberal discourse spurred the adoption of further new policies for pre-school education (Gulløv 2012), defining particular learning objectives guiding the content of day-care activities.[7] Despite the introduction of a more structured curriculum in recent years, many elements of the progressive pedagogy are still highly valued in the Danish day-care institutions and the activities still focus to a great extent on increasing the social awareness of children. While the pedagogues may introduce various activities during the day, free play is considered very important in allowing children to decide for themselves how they want to spend their time. The pedagogues' primary role thus remains that of offering a safe, creative and caring environment, where the children can develop their social skills and human qualities, rather than providing an educational institution teaching particular skills and knowledge that will prepare the children for school (Gulløv 2012: 95). Danish pre-schools thereby present a striking contrast to much day-care abroad (Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa 2009; Connolly 1998) where structured curricula organize the main part of the day. Nevertheless, as we shall show, the free play, and associated development of social skills and human qualities in the Danish kindergartens, has remained closely circumscribed by stated, and often unstated, cultural values and social norms associated with the Danish middle class. The kindergarten, in other words, is still concerned with producing "good" members of society, even if it no longer uses authoritarian methods. This mission, and the social norms and cultural values that it entails, thus institutes an important framework for the children's development notions of relatedness and belonging.

Kinning in Danish day-care institutions

The upbringing of children in the kindergarten takes place within a wider field of social interrelations that extends between the public institution and the private home. The character of these relations therefore has important consequences for the "successful" rearing of the children. This is borne out by the interviews with teenagers of Danish middle class family background. They primarily associated the kindergarten with positive experiences, where they learned to distinguish between their family relations at home and their play relations in the kindergarten, yet found that these relations supported and supplemented each other. In this way they developed a positive sense of themselves both as individuals belonging to a particular family and as accepted members of a wider community of relations outside the home.

In their recollections the middle class youths distinguished clearly between the caregivers, who were in the kindergarten, and the parents, who were associated with the home (cf. Carsten 2004: 35-38). One boy described the pedagogue as a kind of friend who was fun to be with and willing to play most of the time, in contrast to the parents, who rarely had the time to play but who were loving and made sure the home functioned well. This love was associated with the fact that the children did not have to share their parents with a large group of other children, but at most a few siblings. This meant there was a strong feeling, as another boy explained, that "this is my mother, this is my father, while the pedagogues were something general; all were equal in relation to them." Learning to interact in the larger public setting of the kindergarten was important. A girl explained:

> The kindergarten was not a family, but another kind of community. You behaved in a different way than you did when you were at home. [...] In the kindergarten I always knew how to be well-behaved and I had a clear idea of the boundaries of good behavior. But I didn't mind so much transgressing these boundaries in relation to my parents.

In the everyday kindergarten routine, the main role of the parents was bringing and picking up the children. Some still recalled the pain of parting with parents when they first began to attend the kindergarten:

> In the beginning in the kindergarten I cried a lot, when my father left.
>
> [Do you know why?]
>
> I don't know, I just think it was this feeling that he was not there, and that I was going to be with some people I didn't know. But in fact I did know many of those I was going to be with [from the crèche/nursery]. But then my father used to stay a little, perhaps leave for a few hours and then come again. And then I was happy to see him.

And some had memories of finding it difficult to let the parents go, if they for some reason were upset:

> Me and my father bicycled to the kindergarten and I fell and hurt my arm, and I was simply so upset that I wouldn't let him go. [...] I remember that he talked about having to go to the university, but I wouldn't allow it. It ended when I played catch, but I remember keeping him back for an awful long time.

If the children at times did not want their parents to leave, they were not always keen to leave the kindergarten when the parents came to pick them up, especially if they were playing with other children. One teenager, for example, remembered that it was a favored sport to hide

from parents when they came – but usually in the same place, making it rather easy for the parents to find them.

Through their daily experience of parting with parents, having occasional bouts of missing them during the day, looking forward to being reunited towards the end of the day, and playfully hiding when they came, the children developed a special sense of relatedness to their parents. This sense thus was not only based on statements and practices revolving around care relations associated with the home, but also on regular periods of separation, much in line with Matei Candea's (2010) suggestion that absence can be a key aspect of kin relations. The significance of the daily separation and reunification of children and parents is reflected in the almost ritual pattern that it follows. The teenagers described in detail how in the morning the parent would go with them to their particular closet in the entrance hall, marked by an individual sign such as a lady bird or a flower, where they would hang up their coat, take off their shoes and put on their slippers. Then the parents would bring them to the room where their group of children and associated pedagogues were located, exchange a few words with the pedagogues and then leave, thus formally transferring responsibility for the child to the pedagogues. In the afternoon, the children remembered, the parents would sometimes spend a little time in the kindergarten, learning about special occurrences during the day, admiring any artwork produced and chatting with the pedagogues as well as other parents. In this way, they showed not just parental concern with the wellbeing of their child, but also an interest in the kindergarten as such. The teenagers had fond memories of this parental presence in the kindergarten toward the end of the day:

> My parents always knew what took place in the kindergarten, and they have always had a good relationship with the other parents. I remember many times, while I was putting on my clothes, my parents were standing there talking with other parents and most likely also the pedagogues [...]. One boy who also went there's mother, Susanne, I remember my mother used to talk with her. I think he was one year older than me. I just have this image of them standing there and talking. It was quite cosy [*hyggeligt*].

On special occasions the parents would play a more active role in the kindergarten, for example bringing treats or a cake for birthday celebrations, participating in parent meetings, and helping at special events.

In the kindergarten, the children not only developed a specific sense of relatedness toward their parents, they also learned that this relatedness influenced their social identity. One of the teenagers who had attended the same kindergarten as her older sister remembered: "The pedagogues, I think they liked us, but then they were rather fond of our family." Her younger brother similarly reported:

> There was one [pedagogue] we called Yellow Kirsten [after the yellow room where she had her group of children] and I think that she liked me, which meant that I also liked her, so we had a good friendship. And then my older siblings had also attended the kindergarten, so she kind of knew my mother.

The children's experiences of the kindergarten thus were shaped by their association with a particular family and the social identity that this bestowed upon them, well before they entered the institution. Once an identity as a good family had been established, the kindergarten staff seems to have been quite forgiving when problems arose. The same girl who noted that the pedagogues liked her family thus recalled that her father failed to pick her

up after he had attended a Christmas lunch, thinking that it was his wife's turn. One of the pedagogues took her along on her Christmas shopping until she managed to make contact with the family. The father made amends by giving some bottles of wine to the kindergarten, and the family's good relations with the staff were not disturbed.

While the interviews with Danish middle class teenagers showed that they, as young kindergarten children, had developed a strong sense that they came from nice and likeable families, observations showed that children of non-Danish or lower class background had a much less secure position in the kindergarten due to their particular family background . This is exemplified by an informal conversation with the head of a suburban kindergarten who recalled the fear and trepidation with which she had received two boys of what she called "problem-families," one of Danish, the other of Palestinian origin:

> I just knew it would be difficult. To be quite honest I think we are all a bit frightened of the father of Mohammed so it was with dread we received the youngest son of the family. Mohammed has turned out to be just as much trouble as we feared. He and Dennis [the boy from the Danish "problem-family"] are two of a kind.

While some children were categorized as part of problem families before they even began in the kindergarten, others quickly fell into this category because their parents were unfamiliar with the codes of being a good kindergarten parent. One such child was the girl Amina who had a very difficult start in a suburban kindergarten. Amina's father was a Palestinian refugee who after some years in Denmark decided to marry a young woman from his native country. Unlike most Danish children Amina had not attended the crèche before she began in the kindergarten, and she therefore was not used to being away from her mother. Furthermore, her mother Kirdan did not know how she was expected to behave as a parent in the kindergarten and therefore did not act as expected by the pedagogues. Rather than proceeding to the room of her daughter's group in order to drop her off, she stayed every day in the entrance hall with her crying child, who wouldn't let go of her mother.[8] Kirdan's behavior caused great frustration amongst the pedagogues who did not know how to handle the shy and uncommunicative mother. As time went by their interactions with Kirdan became increasingly coloured by their annoyance. One problem was Kirdan's inability to speak Danish. Another and more serious issue, however, was her behavior because, by staying in the entrance hall, she gave no indication of attempting to adjust to the institutional norms and values. Kirdan's behavior affected not only Amina's introduction to the kindergarten but also her position in the institution. Staff began to refer to Amina as "bilingual (*tosproget*)", which in a Danish context does not refer to the ability to speak two languages but is a euphemism for a person belonging to an immigrant family with little or no education. This was not a neutral observation but a categorization and as such an active, negative element in the formation of her social identity in the kindergarten.

The pedagogues' tendency to identify the children in terms of different sorts of families thus had important repercussions for their children's acceptance in the community of the kindergarten. For the children of Danish middle class background, who were associated with "good" families, it meant acceptance and inclusion, whereas for the children of non-Danish or lower class background, who become linked with "problem families", it meant rejection and exclusion. This illustrates how family and kinship can be "mobilized to signify not only

specific kinds of connection and inclusion but also specific kinds of disconnection and exclusion" (Franklin and McKinnon 2001:15).

Danish day-care institutions as sites of the production of middle-class citizens

The pre-schools not only offer professional care for children by a well-trained staff, they also, as noted, seek to shape the future citizenry by teaching them the skills they regard as important to master in order to be part of Danish society. This moulding of new citizens is informed by Danish middle class values that are generally taken for granted by staff and rarely questioned by parents, either because they share these values or because they are not in a position to question them. A central organized activity in the kindergarten, reflecting middle class values, is the meal at noon where the children are taught how to interact socially.

During a typical day in a Danish kindergarten children and pedagogues share a number of meals. Only the early starters eat breakfast in the institution whereas all children participate in an early lunch followed by "fruit" in the afternoon. In a period when the disappearance of the traditional family meal is subject to public debate (Mestdag 2005), Danish kindergartens can be seen as strongholds defending the meal as a meaningful social event (see Lupton 1994) founded on good middle class values (Frykman and Löfgren (2003 [1979]:116, Olwig 2011). Food should not be eaten alone hurriedly whenever hungry. It should be shared at a carefully prepared meal. The social significance of the meal in the kindergarten is signaled by the many rituals enframing it. Before participating all the children must wash their hands and the table must be laid nicely with plates, glasses and cutlery in the right place.[9] Children are not permitted to eat before everybody is seated and it is considered impolite to speak with the mouth full of food and to chew and drink at the same time: "chew, swallow and then drink", the children are admonished. Conversing is allowed as long as it does not hinder eating, but negative comments on the food of others are not permitted. Outbursts such as "ugh, I do not like that!" or "yuk, you eat pig!" are not acceptable and reprimanded by staff. Occasionally a member of staff might comment positively on a particularly inviting and healthy looking sandwich: "that looks really nice!" or "look, I also have an apple!"

In order to acquire broader social skills regarded as necessary to become a well functioning member of society, kindergartens also train social interaction outside mealtimes. Key among these skills is the ability to interact with other children and grownups in ways that are socially acceptable to the Danish middle class. Physical outbursts are discouraged and children are trained to verbalize their feelings (Bundgaard and Gulløv 2003). The teaching program "Step by step" has been developed with this particular goal in mind. While children are typically placed in a circle, a pedagogue might show a sketch of a face expressing a particular emotion such as sorrow or anger and then ask the children how they think the person feels and why the person might feel like that: "Why do you think he is looking so sad?" and "What will you do if you see somebody looking like that?" "Circle time" is a common form of organized sociality in a kindergarten and emphasizes teaching children to listen to each other, be considerate, take turns and wait for one another – in short, they are taught democratic values.

Middle class values are also reflected in other activities that are thought to be of great importance in (middle-class) upbringing: drawing, creating "art", and listening to a story. Children are commonly encouraged to draw or do other creative work while sitting in groups

often with a pedagogue. These activities are meant to enhance the fine motor skills of the children. Listening to a story and the ability to sit quietly while a grown up reads aloud are also highly valued in kindergartens as an activity that strengthens vocabulary as well as imagination. In one of the kindergartens observed in a middleclass area it was common for a parent to read to a group of children in the morning. The institution encouraged this practice and invested in a big armchair where parents could sit when reading aloud for the children. The kindergarten also organized weekly visits of a former schoolteacher, now pensioner, who would read for the children. She would arrive armed with a selection of books from the local library and the children would literally come running to join her. They were all familiar with reading as a cosy and intimate activity. In this particular kindergarten the head had initiated an increase in activities related to books. The head of the kindergarten knew the intake area well and thus could safely assume that parents would be only too happy to support an initiative related to reading. There was thus never any doubt that the parents would support her initiative. Ensuring that the children were familiar with, and appreciated, books was generally high on the priority list of caring practices amongst this group of middle class parents who considered books to be an important aspect of upbringing, caring and kinning (see Heath 2000 [1986]).

In an area where it is common for both parents to work full time and commute considerable distances to work, some families might not have practiced as much reading as they would ideally like. For them the book initiative therefore was most welcome because it eased their bad conscience. There were a few who found the fuss made of reading exaggerated; however, they kept it to themselves.

Breaking the "negative heritage"

The formative role undertaken by the kindergartens becomes most explicit in relation to children from low-income families, who do not necessarily share the middle class values of the kindergarten (see Ehn 1983), and this role is even more apparent if these families also happen to be of immigrant background. All parents are expected to bring their children to day-care, whether or not they have the time to take care of them. More or less permanently unemployed parents who are on social welfare thus will often get free day-care for their children. The intention is to ensure that the children are socially stimulated, which is thought to increase their chance of breaking with what is commonly referred to as their "negative social heritage". Immigrant parents are also encouraged to enroll their children in day-care. Nurses, who make regular visits to all mothers with new-born babies, generally advise immigrant mothers to sign up their baby for day-care in order to ensure that the child can attend from as young an age as possible and thus learn the Danish language and be introduced to Danish (middle-class) social norms and values.

As demonstrated in the previous section, daily activities in pre-schools reflect the bourgeois culture from which the institution of the kindergarten emerged. It is founded on assumptions of a shared set of values of which a joint meal, particular hygienic practices and reading are some examples. Participant observation in kindergartens revealed, however, that the pedagogues often were frustrated in their attempts to teach Danish middle class values and social norms to the children of lower-class immigrant families. One pedagogue working in a kindergarten that was located in an ethnically and socially mixed neighborhood compared her experiences in this institution unfavorably with her former experience of

working in a middle class area with "nice families". Considering the social significance of the meal it is interesting that kindergartens at the time of fieldwork only rarely served lunch.[10] Instead children brought sandwiches from home. Apart from the children themselves their lunchboxes thus crossed between the families and the kindergarten blurring the boundaries between family and state. The exchange of a packed lunch was a social act laden with meaning. The content of a lunch box, prepared by the parents, was decoded by staff as "signs of care" (Thorne 2001: 368ff) and affected a child's experiences in the kindergarten. Despite a common ban on negative comments on other children's food, the sandwiches in a child's lunch box occasionally triggered a quiet exchange between staff members: "Jam on white bread again, I just don't get it…."[11] At times the staff would take the issue up with the parents of the child explaining to them that their child's lunch was inadequate and might ruin the child's teeth. Thus, not only the children but also their parents were taught appropriate care giving practices if the staff had reason to doubt the quality of the child's upbringing. Such exchanges were quite different from the pleasantries exchanged between middle-class parents and staff. Although the children were too young to understand precisely what was going on during these exchanges they nevertheless experienced that the practice of the home was somehow unsatisfactory. Their experience contrasted with children with middle class background whose parents in a striking parallel to the preparation of obentos by Japanese mothers (Allison 1997) made a special effort to show their competence as caregivers. One example is an Iranian girl who brought an egg on which her mother had drawn a smiley face on one side and written "*jeg elsker dig*" (I love you) on the other side, despite the fact that the girl could not yet read. Another example is a girl of Danish origin whose mother often decorated a homemade pancake with a chocolate smiley. Interestingly this sweet did not trigger negative comments by staff.

Another way in which the kindergarten staff found some families lacking was within the area of bodily hygiene (see Frykman and Löfgren (2003 [1979]) for a discussion of how conceptions of cleanliness vary across time and social group). The degree to which cleanliness plays a role in the sociality of Danish kindergartens came to the fore in the close interactions between children and adults as well as in the discussions and actions of staff when confronted with what they considered dirty and smelly children. The strength of the hygienic norms became apparent during a conversation with the head of a kindergarten in a suburban mixed neighborhood. She recounted how it had been necessary to instruct a member of staff to give a little girl (of Danish origin) a regular bath, deeming her alcoholic mother too far gone to care about what the head of the kindergarten considered to be crucial "signs of care" (Thorne 2001). The kindergarten could not force the mother to live up to dominant middle class notions concerning proper care taking in terms of hygiene; it nevertheless interfered in what would generally be understood as people's private family life by giving the daughter a bath in the kindergarten. While the regular baths most likely meant that the girl developed close relations with staff, the intervention simultaneously questioned the care giving practices in her home, and thus her mother's parenting abilities.

The kindergarten's attempts to create a love for reading also proved difficult when it came to certain children. One pedagogue was at her wits end because several children in her group would never sit quietly and listen when she wanted to read to them. In her opinion their parents were at fault not having "brought up their children properly". It was apparent that

some children did indeed find it difficult to sit still and listen for more than a few minutes. Reading sessions were supposedly interactive. The pre-school teacher would read a passage and ask the children about the content. Whereas children from middle class families easily entered into a dialogue about the text, knowing how to relate it to general life experiences, and thus draw meaning from the text, children from lower class families often did not know what to make of the text. Having grown up in social housing areas with little exposure to other parts of the country, they found it difficult to relate to the daily activities, for example, of a farmer, and lacked the relevant vocabulary to participate in the conversation. After only a few minutes these children, as a rule, would begin to shift uneasily, talk amongst themselves or interrupt the reading. The result was invariably that they were told to be quiet and if (when) they continued to disturb they were told to go to the playground or the "romping room" [sic] (*tumlerummet*, a room full of pillows and mattresses where children can engage in rough play). When the pedagogue took her group the local library she ended in tears because some of the children, unfamiliar with how to behave in a library, made an unacceptable racket. She did not invite these particular children to the library again.

Having been dismissed from these group activities the children would engage in some of the other available activities that they mastered, such as driving a moon car or a pillow fight in the "romping room". At an early age they thus learned that books and activities related to books were highly valued in the kindergarten, and closely linked to its organized social activities, but that these activities were not for them.

It is difficult to know whether the children, whose families did not share the institutional ideas of proper child rearing, realized that their families' practices were likely to be called into question. Observations in pre-schools suggest, however, that children as young as three years of age were indeed aware of conflicting values between their home and the pre-school and took care to hide their specific preferences from the pedagogues. It took several months of fieldwork to realize that Palestinian boys played a particular game when they were on their own and at a safe distance from pedagogues. Rather than "cowboys and Indians" or "police and thieves" they would play "Jews and Palestinians." In this game evil Jews would invariably shoot Palestinians, but a hero, Osama Bin Laden, would come to the rescue of the Palestinians. One of the children explained that he had seen a Jew shooting a Palestinian boy close up. He was referring to an incident, broadcast by Al Jezeera, in which an Israeli soldier shot and killed a 12 year-old boy despite his father's futile attempt to save his son. It is not surprising that the children would play this particular game only with other Palestinian children who were familiar with the implicit references (Bundgaard and Gulløv 2008). None of the other children in the kindergarten at the time (2002-3) knew of Osama Bin Laden nor did they have any notion of what "Jew" might mean. It is noteworthy, however, that the children somehow knew that this game was unlikely to be well received amongst the pedagogues. Thus, we never heard the children mention Osama Bin Laden, or Jews for that matter, within the hearing range of staff.

Conclusion

In this paper we have shown that the day-care institutions, founded on the norms of Danish middle class culture rooted in the nineteenth century, play an important role in creating an awareness among the children of the particular nature of their family relations and the place of belonging this gives them in the community of the kindergarten and, by implication, in

Danish society as a whole. The children of ethnically Danish, middle class background will generally experience that expectations concerning "proper" behavior and "correct" manners correspond closely in the kindergarten and the home. It will therefore be relatively simple for them to negotiate the two sites of socialization and to become part of the community of the kindergarten that, gradually, will lead into membership of the wider Danish society. Furthermore, they will experience that their parents – and their home – are viewed as a positive source of identification in Danish society.

The children whose parents do not comply with, or share, the ideas and practices of child rearing promoted by the institutions, on the other hand, may experience difficulty adapting to the kindergarten. They will not be so familiar with the unspoken mores governing proper social interaction, and the acceptable forms of "free play" that are rooted in tacit middle-class assumptions. They may therefore play "incorrectly." When they do become aware of the difference in norms, they are faced with the complicated task of negotiating the social and cultural differences between the norms of their home and of the kindergarten. Furthermore, they may be subjected to negative pre-categorization as children who need to break their "negative" social, or cultural heritage, which, as has been seen, affects not only their reception in the kindergarten, but also the pedagogues' reading of their behavior when they begin in the pre-school. A verbal outburst (which is frowned upon by the Danish middle class), for example, is likely to be seen as a confirmation of the presumed problems that are associated with these children and will be dealt with accordingly. The action of a child pre-categorized as a potential troublemaker is thus unlikely to be met with the benefit of doubt that would be offered a child showing proper, respectable, Danish middleclass norms. Whereas children growing up in "well-functioning" middleclass homes benefit from their association with their parents, children growing up in "problem-families" have a poorer chance of acquiring a positive position in the pre-school. Not unlike McDermott's discussion of the potential effects of a category such as ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) (McDermott 1993), a "problem-family" is a category ready to be activated. It offers itself as a potential explanation whenever a child's behavior falls outside the standard norm. These children may therefore find that their notions of relatedness toward their family and their place of belonging in Danish society are called into serious question.

We have argued that the Danish kindergarten emerged as an institution celebrating the virtues of harmonious, intimate Danish family life where children could express their creativity and learn the art of interacting in appropriate ways. This family was viewed as the basis of the democratic nation-state that became established during the nineteenth century and developed into the modern welfare society in the course of the twentieth century. The kindergarten, with its focus on proper social interaction and free play, has attempted to socialize the children to become good, responsible citizens who can be included in this national community, but with somewhat mixed results. At the same time there has been an influx of children with radically different cultural norms that challenge the cultural hegemony of the institutions. But one child's natural "free" play may be another child's forced, constrained and unnatural activity. For some a more explicit, structured social and educational agenda may thus establish a framework of interaction that will be more inclusive than the traditional, seemingly "open" system, based on play that is supposedly free, yet based on implicit Danish middle-class social norms and cultural values. What these issues

suggest, therefore, is that even at the level of the kindergarten, the role of kinning in the welfare state is important and potentially fraught with conflict.

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[1] Børnehaven is believed to be a Danish translation of a German book published at the same time (Stybe: n.p.).

[2] The fieldwork was part of the research project "Bilingual children in Danish Kindergartens", conducted by Eva Gulløv and Helle Bundgaard and funded by the Danish Research of the Humanities.

[3] The fieldwork was part of a larger research project "Civilizing institutions in a modern welfare state" and funded by the Danish Research Council of the Social Sciences.

[4] The Danish state enacted the legislation in 1919 (Borchorst 2005: 133-146 in Gulløv 2012).

[5] Only 15 percent of the children between 6 and 12 months are cared for outside their home.

[6] For a detailed analysis of the development of progressive education in Denmark see Hermann (2007).

[7] For a discussion of the development in pedagogy in Denmark see Sigsgaard 1978; Vejleskov 1997.

[8] In his book Children and institutions (2001) Erik Sigsgaard discusses the advantages of an institutional arrangement in which children and parents when arriving in the morning are received in a common area full of life as opposed to an empty entrance hall.

[9] Forks and knives are not necessarily part of the arrangement if the food eaten consists of sandwiches.

[10] In 2010 the Danish government attempted to introduce mandatory lunch in kindergartens. This was quickly changed into 'flexible' lunch by which was meant that all children in kindergartens must be offered a healthy lunch every day but the parents have the right to influence the quality of the food.

[11] In a study of refugees placed in a small Danish town Larsen (2011) shows how the pedagogues in the local kindergarten contacted the social welfare office when the mother of two young children continued to give them wheat buns (krydderboller) in their lunch pack.